

**ACCURACY**

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August 21, 1972

Mr. William B. Ray, Chief  
Complaints and Compliance  
Broadcast Bureau  
F.C.C.  
Washington, D. C. 20554

Dear Mr. Ray:

On July 28, 1972, NBC presented in its Chronolog series a documentary on the narcotics traffic in Southeast Asia.

We have analyzed this program and have concluded that it fails to meet the Fairness Doctrine requirement that the licensee provide a balanced presentation of all sides in programming that deals with controversial issues of public importance. We therefore wish to file a complaint of violation of the fairness doctrine against all NBC-owned and affiliated stations that carried the program.

There appear to be three principal controversial issues involved in the NBC documentary.

1. The documentary dealt with the question of whether or not America's allies in Southeast Asia--Thailand, Laos and Vietnam--are important sources of supply of heroin for the American market.

2. It discussed the charges that U. S. Government agencies have been involved in assisting those who are trafficking in narcotics in Southeast Asia and the accusation that our Government has not been aggressive in fighting the traffic because we did not want to do anything to hinder the war effort.

3. It discussed charges that the Governments of Thailand, Vietnam and Laos are not cooperating adequately in combatting the narcotics traffic, charges that have led to legislative proposals that aid to these countries be terminated.

Our analysis suggests that all of these issues were deliberately treated in a manner that was intended to lead the viewer to the conclusion that American allies in Southeast Asia were important sources of heroin for the American market, that the governments of Thailand, Laos and Vietnam were not cooperating adequately in putting down the traffic and that U. S. agencies were themselves involved in supporting the traffic.

Moreover, we find that NBC has managed to give support to these conclusions and to avoid presenting evidence that would lead to contrary conclusions by its news programming. For example, perhaps the largest amount of opium ever deliberately destroyed was burned in Thailand on March 7, 1972 by the Thai Government. This event was not reported on the NBC evening TV news program at that time. Never-

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theless, on its July 28 program, NBC referred to this massive destruction of opium as Thailand's "well publicized March extravaganza." It was certainly not well-publicized by NBC. On the contrary, NBC suppressed any report of it.

On August 14, 1972, General Lewis W. Walt, USMC (ret.) testified before the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee on the narcotics traffic in Southeast Asia. General Walt, who had recently made an on-the-spot investigation of the narcotics problem in Southeast Asia for the committee, praised the efforts being made by the Thai Government and others to control the traffic. NBC did not report one word of General Walt's testimony on its evening TV news program. However, on the same day that the General testified, NBC put Alfred McCoy, the chief promulgator of the line that Southeast Asia has become a main source of heroin for the U. S., that our allies are doing little to control the traffic and that our own government agencies have helped the traffic, was given five minutes on the NBC Today program to plug his line and his new book.

We submit that the suppression of news of General Walt's testimony and the granting of an additional 5 minutes of time to Alfred McCoy on the very day that General Walt testified confirms that one-sidedness has characterized the NBC discussion of the narcotics traffic of Southeast Asia. The Chronolog program is part of the same pattern.

To make the point that Southeast Asia is an important source of heroin for the U. S. market, NBC Chronolog quoted a "professional estimate" that one-third of the heroin in our market came from Southeast Asia. Even Alfred McCoy thinks this is too high a figure. NBC did not put any other estimates before its viewers, nor did it point out that until recently it is believed that 80 per cent of our heroin came from Turkey. NBC did not point out that Turkey had been a serious problem for several years and that it was only after long and difficult negotiations that we succeeded in persuading Turkey to make the cultivation of opium poppies illegal. By failing to give this broader background, NBC created the impression that Thailand, Laos and Cambodia were major problem suppliers and were particularly uncooperative in dealing with the traffic. The fact is that they have been nothing like Turkey as a problem source of supply, and they have all moved more rapidly than Turkey in making efforts to stamp out the traffic. NBC charged that the so-called "golden triangle" area produces 900 to 2700 tons of illicit opium a year. A recent government report puts illicit opium production in Burma, Thailand and Laos at 700 tons a year. This difference between NBC's estimates and our official estimates was not mentioned, much less explained.

By exaggerating the importance of Southeast Asia as a source of heroin supply to the U. S. market, NBC misled its viewers about the significance of the fact that the United States has taken action only within recent years to get Southeast Asian governments to curb opium production and traffic. NBC promotes the view that the U. S. officials were deliberately ignoring the problem because it would hurt the war effort to pressure the governments to ban opium. No one was presented on the program to point out that U. S. concern with opium in this area began as soon as it became known that heroin use by American troops in Vietnam was a serious problem.

While NBC permitted charges to be aired that the CIA and our military forces were involved in the narcotics traffic, it did not put on a single government official to deny those charges. In a letter published in The Washington Star on July 5, 1972, W. E. Colby, Executive Director of the CIA, responded to similar

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charges, denying them. NBC made no use of this statement by Mr. Colby nor of any similar statement by any of his colleagues.

NBC did discuss some of the progress that had been made by Southeast Asian governments, but it minimized the achievements and emphasized the failures. For example, in discussing the destruction of 26 tons of opium by Thailand, opium whose street value in heroin equivalent in the U. S. would be in excess of \$1 billion, NBC dismissed this as little more than a public relations stunt. NBC permitted Mr. McCoy to make much of the fact that the KMT Chinese in northern Burma were once supported by the CIA, implying that the CIA is therefore responsible for everything they have done over the past 20 years. NBC did not mention that the 26 tons of opium destroyed in Thailand in March came from the KMT people and that they pledged to give up dope-running as part of the deal made with the Thai government. Nor did NBC mention that the Thai Government was the first to enter into an agreement with the United Nations to provide for compensation of farmers who give up opium cultivation.

The issue of cutting off aid to Thailand because of the opium traffic is one that is currently agitating our Congress. NBC put on three congressmen, Wolff, Rangel and Steele who have taken a very hard line on this issue. NBC put not a single congressman on the program to represent the view that cutting off aid would not be desirable. There are, of course, many congressmen who take that point of view. They would point out, among other things, that we are getting far better cooperation from Thailand than we are from Burma, a country that we do not give aid to.

Our timing of the various statements on the Chronolog program indicates that nearly four times as much time was given to those who made statements critical of the Southeast Asian countries and the United States policies than to those who answered these criticisms and charges. NBC's own statements were very heavily weighted on the side of the McCoy thesis.

Moreover, the program gave a one-sided and misleading impression about the attitude of the communists toward production and distribution of narcotics. It suggested that the communists were hard on the producers and traffickers. It made no mention whatsoever of charges that have been made about illicit opium being produced in North Vietnam and of illicit opium coming from Mainland China. The role of these countries in the drug traffic is certainly an issue of importance and controversy, and omission of it could be explained as being motivated by the desire of NBC to focus criticism on the allies of the United States in Southeast Asia.

In summary, we believe that NBC did not comply with the requirements of the fairness doctrine in discussing the narcotics traffic in Southeast Asia on July 28, 1972. Its powerful voice was lent to a campaign that is underway to discredit the United States Government and its allies in Southeast Asia, playing upon the public's fear and hatred of heroin. The program did not provide the viewers with balanced information that would enable them to weigh charges made by Alfred McCoy. Instead, the program was largely a vehicle for the transmission of McCoy's ideas. This was supplemented by McCoy's appearance on the Today show on July 14 and by the blackout of the testimony of General Walt on the same day.

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AIM raised a number of questions about this program in a letter to NBC dated July 28, 1972. We have received a reply from NBC that is not at all responsive to our request for comments.

We request that you investigate the Chronolog program of July 28, 1972. We feel that you will conclude as we have that NBC has not given adequate representation to the views of the CIA, the U. S. military, many members of Congress and to that substantial body of opinion which holds that both Communist China and North Vietnam are an important part of the Southeast Asian narcotics problem.

We ask that you instruct the NBC-owned stations and the NBC affiliates that they have a duty to offset the one-sided presentation of the Chronolog program by appropriate programs, including interviews with such men as General Walt, who can put the matter into perspective and tell the people what is being done.

Sincerely yours,

*Abraham H. Kalish*

Abraham H. Kalish  
Executive Secretary

cc: Julian Goodman  
Reuven Frank  
Cong. Harley O. Staggers  
Richard Helms  
Clay T. Whitehead  
Gen. Lewis W. Walt  
Senator James Eastland  
Nelson Gross  
Variety  
Broadcasting